

The Yellow House School

1 Alderford Street, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, CO9 3HX

Inspection dates

3–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- Students' achievement is good and all gain qualifications in English and mathematics. Some attain well in GCSE examinations and obtain grades between A to C. This is because a good curriculum ensures individual students' needs are met.
- Behaviour is good, and students become polite and thoughtful young people. They receive outstanding levels of care and guidance from staff. The students feel safe at school and make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development. This is because the headteacher and leaders are dedicated to supporting their individual needs.
- Parents really appreciate everything the school staff do for their child. They value the reports and home visits they regularly receive.
- Teaching is good and so practical activities are used successfully to develop students' basic skills. Staff expect a great deal from students who, as a result, learn to use their initiative and be creative.
- Leadership and management are good and so students' achievement and teaching have improved considerably since the last inspection. Staff have successfully completed many training courses which assist them to work effectively with all students, including the most able.

It is not yet outstanding because

- A few students do not gain extra qualifications which employers would find useful.
- Staff do not always give students specific oral and written feedback about their work.
- Students do not regularly consider what they have done well and could do to improve towards the end of a session.
- Student progress is not watched over in enough detail because criteria to assess work are rather broad.
- Targets for improvement are not recorded effectively after teaching has been observed.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed seven lessons or part lessons taught by seven tutors. One was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Policies and other documents were examined, as was students' work and other evidence about their progress, records of training and observations of teaching and learning. The inspector observed students' behaviour and examined the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector held discussions with staff, students, contacted three local authority representatives and considered six questionnaires from members of staff. The inspector spoke to five parents and carers by telephone.

Inspection team

Jackie Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Yellow House School is an independent day special school which operates from two sites. The school opened in Sible Hedingham, Essex in 2002 and a second site opened in 2006 at Clare in Suffolk.
- There is provision for up to 15 students aged between 13 and 17 years. Currently, ten students are on roll.
- The school combines therapeutic and educational provision which meets the individual needs of boys and girls.
- Most students have complex requirements including communication, behavioural, emotional and social needs. All students have statements of special educational needs and are referred and funded by their local authority. Students have had previously disrupted education and have attended poorly at their previous schools.
- All teaching is carried out by a team of seven tutors and one qualified teacher under the leadership of the headteacher, who is also a qualified teacher.
- Nearly all students are from White British backgrounds and a very small number are from minority ethnic groups. A very small number of students are in the care of the local authority.
- The school was last inspected in 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop students' achievement and teaching by ensuring that:
 - students gain more qualifications which employers would value
 - all staff use specific oral and written feedback to explain to students what they can do to reach the next level of skill
 - in all sessions, students consider what they have done well and could do to improve their work.
- Improve leadership and management so that all leaders:
 - use more specific criteria to assess students' work so that they and staff check more rigorously on how much progress students make at least every three months
 - record targets for staff in detail after their teaching has been observed so that they can easily collect evidence to demonstrate that these targets have been met.

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Students join the school having missed considerable amounts of time in school and so their skills are lower than expected when they start at this school. All groups of students, including those who are looked after by the local authority, achieve well. They make good progress and some catch up with their English, mathematics and science knowledge. As a result, all gain Entry Level and GCSEs or Functional Skills qualifications. In recent years, considerable numbers of the most able students gained GCSEs at grade A to C in mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and history. Students' statements of special educational needs are reviewed regularly and their individual needs are met. Representatives from the local authorities who place students agree that the students achieve well at the school.

Students, including those from minority ethnic groups, develop key skills successfully in literacy and numeracy. This is because planning sets specific objectives about what students will learn in each lesson. Students learn to do things for themselves because staff expect them to be independent and think things through logically. Many skills are developed methodically at the same time. In a good lesson seen, the student learnt about the development of a human foetus by reading information on the internet, using technical vocabulary and measuring out the length of a baby at different stages of development. The student made good progress because the member of staff used his expertise and resources well. The lesson enabled the student to successfully develop independence, literacy, numeracy, ICT, science and child development skills all in one session.

Students are well prepared for the next stage of education because the transition to college is thoughtfully organised. This means that virtually all students go on to college and gain further qualifications. Considerable numbers gain paid employment because of the good careers advice they receive from staff. Some students gain extra qualifications which employers may value, such as first aid or food hygiene, which might make them even more likely to get a job or work as a volunteer.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Good

Students' behaviour and personal development are good. Students cooperate with staff and conduct themselves well. Their behaviour improves quickly after students start at the school and they concentrate productively on learning new skills. This is because staff manage occasional outbursts of unacceptable behaviour calmly and considerately. All staff agree that behaviour is good at the school. The exclusion of students is rare. The students share apparatus fairly and safely because staff guide them very thoughtfully. The students say they are safe at the school and relationships are good. One student said, 'I feel totally safe and I am making better friends here.' Bullying is rare and name calling is dealt with successfully.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All parents said their child's self-esteem had increased since they came to the school. Students were enthusiastic about sharing their work with others and attitudes to learning are positive. For instance, one student was keen to share her art portfolio. She proudly explained how she had written to a famous artist to find out about what had inspired him to create his art work. She described in detail how she had combined paint and materials to create a wonderful collage. Occasionally, students do not reflect sufficiently on what they have done well and could do to improve their work. As a result, they do not all have a deep enough understanding of how to make their work even better.

The students learn to work together successfully and give each other useful advice. They learn what is right and wrong because staff explain rules clearly to them. They have a good level of knowledge about public services and institutions, such as the fire service, because visits out of

school are used effectively. The school makes sure that students have a balanced view whenever political and other issues are discussed, such as those linked to democracy in Britain and in other countries. They are well prepared for life in a multicultural society because projects about other faiths develop students' awareness effectively. Students attend regularly and staff monitor this carefully. Very regular contact with parents and carers means that absence is unusual. Any absence is followed up by staff with a telephone call early on the first day because student safety is given a high priority by leaders and staff.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is good and this enables students to make good progress in developing their key skills. The best teaching uses practical activities to engage students. For example, in a good lesson seen the student learnt to read statements with technical vocabulary and place them in the correct order. This enabled the student to improve her reading comprehension skills and knowledge of science at the same time. Staff expect a great deal from students. For example, a student learnt to plan orally and then wrote a report for a television programme which included complex sentences and connectives. This meant that the student developed her communication and literacy skills successfully. ICT is used productively and students learn to research information on the internet and create hypotheses using data. This means that the students' skills in mathematics and statistics are promoted effectively.

Students are taught in one to one sessions. Assessment is used well and so every session is planned to meet their individual needs. Gaps in their knowledge are established because checks are carried out carefully on students' understanding when they start at the school. Students' attainment and progress are reviewed regularly by staff. Student targets are used methodically in every lesson and so for instance, levels of concentration are watched carefully in all sessions throughout the week. Students receive positive encouragement which develops their self-confidence but oral feedback and written comments in students' books do not always explain what they can do to become even more skilled in each subject.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good and promotes students' basic skills well. Work in students' books and folders shows that they are gaining valuable knowledge in many areas of learning. Projects are created which capture students' interests. For instance, a project about guinea pigs developed a student's mathematical skills as well as her science understanding. This was because her fascination with this animal has been used so successfully to centre the topic and many activities were linked to the care of guinea pigs.

Planning for subjects makes sure that students build up their skills methodically. For example, one student has built up a wide variety of portraits of celebrities using pencil and pastels effectively to add shading and depth. A considerable improvement since the last inspection is the use of a scheme of work to develop students' citizenship and life skills. This means that students learn about ways to look after our environment. For instance, they helped to maintain a local area of woodland because resources and local people were worked with so successfully. Other topics systematically promote students' understanding of other faiths and cultures. A beautiful display celebrated their work on Buddhism and India. Students enjoy a wide range of ways to keep fit, be healthy and take part in sports activities. They like going swimming, playing tennis and taking part in cross-country hikes. Extra activities are planned which enable students to go bowling and camping with appropriate adult supervision.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety**Good**

Students' welfare, health and safety are good because the school's leadership gives these a high priority. All the requirements for this standard are met. The school's policies for establishing good behaviour, preventing bullying, health and safety both in school and on outside visits, and safeguarding reflect the Secretary of State's guidance and are well implemented. All the necessary checks are made on premises and fire prevention equipment.

The care, guidance and support of students' well-being are outstanding. A carefully managed induction programme ensures that students successfully settle into the school's routines and develop their confidence and application to work. Parents, carers and students have a school telephone number which they can ring whenever they need help. Parents and students say how much they appreciate the way that their concerns are very sensitively supported by staff. The staff are extremely skilled at listening to students and giving them thoughtful advice. This ensures that staff keep students safe and healthy. Staff watch over students at break times as carefully as in lesson time, and they often play games with them which develop their social skills. School records show clearly how any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are managed and followed up. A suitable number of staff have completed training in first aid. Staff know how to handle medical emergencies and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Health and safety issues are sorted out efficiently. Fire drills are carried out regularly and appropriate records are kept.

Safeguarding procedures are effective and systems to recruit staff are thorough. All the necessary checks are carried out on staff before they are left in charge of students, and a single central register of these checks is accurately maintained. All staff receive annual basic child protection training and two members of staff are trained at the required higher level. Extremely rigorous risk assessments are carried out which explain how to minimise danger. For example, a detailed assessment was created for an outing where students learnt to canoe on a local river. Students learn to keep themselves safe when they use the internet because of training offered by the school. Rare incidents of bullying are handled thoughtfully. Registers of attendance and admissions of students are kept methodically. Senior staff check these regularly and are aware of patterns of absence that need further investigation. Parents and carers who communicated with the inspector agree that students are safe in school and say that staff care for the students exceedingly well.

Leadership and management**Good**

Leadership and management are good and all the independent school standards are met. This is because the headteacher and senior leaders place an equal priority on developing students' personal, social and emotional needs as well as their academic skills. Students are encouraged to gain qualifications and become useful members of the community. School leaders accurately evaluate how well they are doing and are always looking for ways to improve the school. A considerable improvement since the last inspection is in the use of student targets which staff employ to see how students are improving their personal skills. This means that students become more self-disciplined and have better attitudes to learning. Students' progress is checked regularly and it is tracked. However, the system currently in use does not use specific enough criteria to assess students' level of understanding in academic subjects. It is therefore difficult to see whether they are making sufficient progress or not every three months.

The leadership of teaching is good. Staff have completed a wide range of courses to develop their skills in working with students who have additional needs. For instance, the coordinator for students with special educational needs recently completed the national qualification in this aspect. As a result of this training, he has refined the individual learning programmes for students so that they are more concise and easier to use. The school works productively with other agencies to support students' needs. Staff have been well trained to help them support the most able students for GCSEs. The headteacher keeps a close eye on the quality of teaching and holds regular discussions with staff about ways to make it even more effective. However, records are not kept

about the areas of development agreed for each member of staff after their teaching has been observed. This means that it is not easy for staff to subsequently present evidence that they have efficiently met these targets and that they are regularly using the new skills they have developed.

Parents and carers work well with leaders and staff. All those who spoke to the inspector on the telephone were very positive about everything that the school has done for their child. The parents and carers say the students are making good progress. One parent said, 'My child was behind when she arrived but she has nearly caught up with her school work.' The information provided for parents and carers and others, together with the procedures for handling complaints, meets requirements. The premises and accommodation meet requirements. Resources and equipment are suitable for students of this age group.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	134398
Inspection number	422762
DfE registration number	881/6048
Type of school	Special school for students with behavioural, emotional and social needs
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	13–17
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Debbie Pester
Headteacher	Debbie Pester
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£50,931
Telephone number	01787 462504
Fax number	n/a
Email address	yellowhouse@BTconnect.com

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